

# *Literary Devices*

## **Allegory**

A form of literature in which objects and persons are equated with meanings that lie outside the story itself

## **Alliteration**

The deliberate repetition of sounds or syllables, especially initial consonants, for stylistic effect (e.g., recreational reading and writing)

## **Allusion**

A brief reference, explicit or implicit, to a place, person, or event; the reference may be historical, literary, religious, or mythological.

## **Anachronism**

Assignment of an event, a person, an object, language – anything, in fact – to a time when that event, person, or object was not in existence

## **Archetype**

Prototype, the original pattern or mode, the reference, the set, the example

## **Aside**

The character shares their thoughts with the audience; though other characters are on stage, they are unaware of what that character is saying.

## **Assonance**

The deliberate repetition of similar vowel sounds for stylistic effect (e.g., feel/clean).

## **Cacophony**

A generally harsh unpleasant, clashing combination of sounds (the truculent Turk stood quite quiet)

## **Catharsis**

The purification of the emotions through the spectator's imaginative participation in the sufferings of the tragedy's characters, and the feeling of emotional relief and exaltation induced by tragic literature or art

## **Cliché**

A trite phrase: one that has lost its force through overuse (last but not least)

## **Connotation**

Includes all the ideas that are suggested by the term (home=comfort, love, & security)

## **Consonance**

The agreement of ending consonant sounds when the vowel sounds differ (nature/feature)

## **Denotation**

The exact meaning of a word (home denotes the place where one lives)

## **Diction**

The choice of words or phrases in speech or writing; the particular words chosen to express an idea

## **Dramatic Irony**

Words of a character in a play carry a meaning unknown to him/her, but understood by the audience.

## **Euphemism**

A mild, even vague expression used instead of a harsh, unpleasant one (perspire instead of sweat; lay to rest instead of bury)

## **Euphony**

Produced by a generally pleasing combination of sounds (a damsel in distress)

## **Foil**

A character whose behavior and qualities set off or enhance those of another figure

## **Foreshadowing**

A literary device in which an author provides an indication of future events in the plot

## **Idiom**

A group of words that, through usage, has taken on a special meaning different from the literal meaning (e.g., Keep your shirt on! or It's raining cats and dogs).

## **Imagery**

Descriptions and figures of speech (e.g., metaphors, similes, and other figurative language) used by writers to create vivid mental pictures in the mind of the reader.

**Irony**

A statement or situation that has an underlying meaning different from its literal or surface meaning (Calling someone honest when you really mean that they are dishonest)

**Hamartia**

In tragedy, an error of judgment, made as the result of ignorance or human weakness, which contributes to the downfall of the hero. (A.K.A. tragic flaw)

**Hyperbole**

A literary device in which exaggeration is used deliberately for effect or emphasis (e.g., a flood of tears, piles of money)

**Juxtaposition**

Combined, union

**Metaphor**

A comparison, either expressed or implied, without the use of like or as

**Moral**

Practical lesson taught by a piece of writing

**Onomatopoeia**

The use of a word having a sound that suggests its meaning (e.g., splash, murmur, buzz, twitter)

**Oxymoron**

A combination of words with contradictory meanings, used deliberately for effect (e.g., delicious torment, living death)

**Paradox**

A statement that either seems to or actually does contradict itself (ex. If you don't want to lose him, let him go.)

**Parody**

A work mimicking the language, style, or ideas of another for comic or satiric effect (ex. "To study or not to study, that is the question." Is taken from "To be or not to be, that is the question".)

**Pastoral**

Dealing with shepherd's or simple rural life

**Pathetic Fallacy**

The atmosphere/surroundings reflect the mood/feelings of the character(s)

**Pathos**

A quality which incites pity, sorrow, or sympathy in the reader

**Personification**

The giving of personality or life to inanimate objects or ideas

**Rhetorical question**

A question asked not for information but for dramatic effect. The answer may be self-evident (Why should I care what they think?) or immediately provided by the questioner (What should be done? Well, first we should...).

**Satire**

A form of writing in which human follies and vices are held up to ridicule, generally with the intention of reform.

**Simile**

A comparison using "like" or "as"

**Soliloquy**

A speech of a character delivered while the speaker is alone on stage; he/she informs the audience what he/she is thinking

**Symbol**

Something that stands for or represents an abstract idea

**Tone**

A manner of speaking or writing that reveals the speaker's or author's attitude towards a subject and/or audience.

**Theme**

Underlying idea of a piece of writing